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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 003823

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/22/2013

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SUBJECT: ITALY SUPPORTS US VIEWS ON ESDP; EU PRESIDENCY  
WILL PROTECT BERLIN PLUS ON AUGUST 29

REF: A) STATE 235459 B) DONEGAN-BAME EMAIL 8-19

CLASSIFIED BY: A/POL MINISTER COUNSELOR GARY ROBBINS. REASON: 1.5 (B)(D)

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POL:GROBBINS  
POL:JDONEGAN  
POL:KDEGNAN

AMEMBASSY ROME  
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
USNATO IMMEDIATE  
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11. (C) SUMMARY: ITALY SUPPORTS USG VIEWS ON ESDP AND BERLIN PLUS. ITALIAN OFFICIALS CONFIRM THAT THEY HAVE CALLED THE AUGUST 29 ESDP EXPERTS LEVEL MEETING TO PRE-EMPT A RUMORED "GANG OF FOUR" MEETING IN EARLY SEPTEMBER AND TO FOCUS ON THE "POSITIVE ASPECTS" OF THE APRIL 29 SUMMIT DECLARATION. THEY SEE "NO CHANCE" THAT A SEPARATE EU PLANNING CELL AT TERVUREN WOULD RECEIVE BROAD ENOUGH SUPPORT TO BE CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY AT 15 (25). ITALY'S VIEW IS THAT ANY STRUCTURED EU SECURITY COOPERATION WOULD HAVE TO BE APPROVED BY ALL EU MEMBERS. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) ON AUGUST 19, MFA ACTING POLITICAL DIRECTOR CLAUDIO BISOGNERO TOLD A/POL MINISTER COUNSELOR AND POLOFF THAT ITALY SUPPORTS USG VIEWS ON ESDP AND BERLIN PLUS AS DESCRIBED IN REF A, AND THAT THE EU PRESIDENCY'S GOAL IS TO BRING THE DEBATE ON EUROPEAN SECURITY BACK TO 15 (25), AND TO SAFEGUARD BERLIN PLUS. BISOGNERO PROMISED TO PASS OUR POINTS TO MFA EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT AND ESDP COORDINATOR SANDRO DEBERNADIN. ALSO AT THE MEETING WAS ACTING NATO OFFICE DIRECTOR CARLO LO CASCIO, WHO MENTIONED THAT THE ITALIAN MISSION TO NATO HAD TOLD HIM EARLIER THAT DAY THAT THERE WOULD BE A "GANG OF FOUR" MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 9 OR 10 (REF B).

13. (C) IN A FOLLOW UP MEETING ON AUGUST 21, DEBERNADIN CONFIRMED TO POLOFF THAT THE GOAL OF THE ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY IS TO STRENGTHEN ESDP AND EUROPEAN SECURITY CAPABILITIES IN GENERAL, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME REAFFIRMING BERLIN PLUS AS THE GUIDELINE FOR NATO-EU SECURITY RELATIONS AND EU MILITARY OPERATIONS. ITALY HAD CALLED THE AUGUST 29 ESDP EXPERTS LEVEL MEETING OUTSIDE OF THE NORMAL BRUSSELS FRAMEWORK NOT AS A TRIBUNAL TO JUDGE THE FOUR NOR AS A CONCESSION TO THEIR DEMANDS BUT TO FOCUS ON THE "POSITIVE ASPECTS" OF THE APRIL 29 SUMMIT DECLARATION. THERE "IS NO CHANCE" THAT A SEPARATE EU PLANNING CELL AT TERVUREN WILL RECEIVE BROAD ENOUGH SUPPORT TO BE CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY, SAID DEBERNADIN, AND ONE OF THE GOALS OF THE AUGUST 29 MEETING WILL BE TO FIND A FACE-SAVING WAY OF ALLOWING THE FOUR TO BACK OUT OF THAT PROPOSAL. HE SAID THAT ITALY WILL TRY TO PERSUADE THE FOUR THAT A SEPARATE PLANNING CELL IS NOT NECESSARY BY CITING THE FACT THAT THE ARTEMEIS OPERATION DEPLOYED SUCCESSFULLY WITHOUT ONE. DEBERNADIN HAS NO FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE RUMOR OF ANOTHER MEETING OF THE FOUR ON SEPTEMBER 9 OR 10, OTHER THAN THAT HE UNDERSTANDS IT WOULD BE AT THE "TECHNICAL LEVEL." HE IS HOPEFUL THAT THE AUGUST 29 MEETING WOULD PRECLUDE THE PERCEIVED NEED FOR THE FOUR TO CONVENE SEPARATELY.

14. (C) AN EU PLANNING CELL WITHIN SHAPE AND THE "STRUCTURED COOPERATION" ISSUE WILL BE ON THE AGENDA AUGUST 29. DEBERNADIN SAID HE IS IN THE PROCESS OF DISCUSSING BOTH WITH "LIKE-MINDED EU PARTNERS." ITALY'S VIEW IS THAT ANY COOPERATION WOULD HAVE TO BE APPROVED BY ALL EU MEMBERS, EVEN

IF NOT ALL MEMBERS PARTICIPATED IN SPECIFIC INITIATIVES (MUCH LIKE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE EURO). HE TOOK NOTE OF OUR

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CELL WITHIN SHAPE SHOULD REINFORCE D/SACEUR'S ROLE BY ENSURING THAT IT FALL UNDER HIS RESPONSIBILITY.

15. (C) DEBERNADIN SAID THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT JAVIER SOLANA'S DRAFT EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY PAPER WILL BE DISCUSSED AT THE ROME MEETING. THE PAPER IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY DEVELOPED FOR DETAILED DISCUSSION. THE NEXT STEP FOR THE ESS WILL BE AN AGREEMENT ON "METHODOLOGY" AT THE SEPTEMBER 6 RIVA DEL GARDA GYMNICH, FOLLOWED BY THREE "BRAINSTORMING" SEMINARS CONSISTING OF ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM EACH OF THE 25 MEMBER/FUTURE EU STATES, AS WELL AS INVITED NON-GOVERNMENT "SECURITY EXPERTS" FROM ACADEMIA AND THINK TANKS THROUGHOUT EUROPE. THE FIRST OF THESE SEMINARS WILL BE SPONSORED BY THE ASPEN INSTITUTE IN ROME ON SEPTEMBER 17.

16. (C) COMMENT: DEBERNADIN WILL REPRESENT THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY AT THE AUGUST 29 MEETING, ACCOMPANIED BY MOD VICE CHIEF OF DEFENSE (CHOD) MAJOR GENERAL VINCENCO CAMPORINI. CAMPORINI'S EMBASSY CONTACTS CONSIDER HIM TO BE AN EXCELLENT CHOICE, WHO WILL GUARD CAREFULLY AGAINST ANY ATTEMPT BY ANY EU MEMBER STATE TO ERODE NATO'S PRIMACY AS GUARANTOR OF TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY, OR TO WATER DOWN BERLIN PLUS. SKODON

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